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SUBJECT: MFA Issues Two Statements In Response To Critical U.S. and EU Statements

¶1. On March 24-26, the Belarusian MFA published two statements in response to the U.S. and EU actions and statements against Belarus. The March 24 MFA statement denounced the U.S.-EU decision to impose travel sanctions on Belarusian officials as a "senseless" and "dead-end policy." The statement underscored that the popularity of Lukashenko among Belarusians is undeniable and therefore the U.S. and EU must respect the choice of the Belarusian people. The statement concluded by stating that the Belarus reserves the right to undertake reciprocal actions.

¶2. Begin unofficial translation of text of March 24 Statement: Statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus on the Decision by the United States and the European Union to Impose Restrictions Against Belarusian Officials

The European Union and the United States have responded to the election of President of the Republic of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko at the direct and general elections with a decision to impose restrictions against a number of Belarusian officials.

It is difficult to comprehend the sense of this decision. Both the US and the EU had never questioned Mr. Lukashenko being the most popular leader in Belarus who leaves far behind all other contenders. It means that the people's choice is not liked.

At the same time, the US and the EU continue to pronounce their interest in friendly relations with the Belarusian people. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs stresses once again: if the United States and the European Union respect the people of our country, they must respect the choice they have made.

Responding to the people's choice with restrictions means rejecting the Belarusian citizens' right to live in their country at their own discretion, not somebody else's. This policy is not the best. Above all, it is a dead-end policy.

The Republic of Belarus reserves the right to undertake reciprocal actions.

End Text.

¶3. The March 26 MFA statement said U.S. and EU comments on the March 25 violent dispersal and arrests of protesters, including opposition leader Aleksandr Kozulin, bore on "anti-Belarus hysteria." The MFA statement pointed that out that even Ten Plus Coalition leader Alexander Milinkevich (without giving his name) called Kozulin's appeal to march to the BKGB's Okrestina detention center a provocation. The MFA urged the U.S. and EU "to apply unified standards" when criticizing the measures of Belarusian security forces, and warned against destabilizing the situation in Belarus from outside.

¶4. Begin unofficial translation of text of March 26 MFA statement:

Statement by Press Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has already stressed that the European Union and the United States, while commenting on the situation in Belarus, are persistently trying to misrepresent their wish as reality.

The latest statements by the EU Austrian Chairmanship and the US State department press secretary are a demonstration of the European Union and the United States being on the verge of anti-Belarusian hysteria. They either allow someone to mislead them, or delude the European and the American public themselves.

On 25 March 2006, the Belarusian law-enforcement agencies acted with self-restraint and patience neither hindering the conduct of the rally nor taking any suppressive measures, in spite of the fact that the opposition event had not been sanctioned by the city authorities. However, the peaceful conduct of the rally was broken by the opposition leader Alexander Kozulin's call to a coercive overturn of the legitimate regime (coup d'etat) and marching to an establishment of the Ministry of Interior the special admittance and distribution facility under the Minsk interior department. A part of the protesters heeded the call.

The police that blocked the passages to this specially guarded building was attacked and had to restore the order. A. Kozulin and the most aggressive attackers were detained. A number of law-enforcement officers were hit. At present a comprehensive investigation and study of the materials is being carried out with the aim to provide a legal assessment of the actions of the non-sanctioned event participants.

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We would like to draw the attention of the EU and the US to the fact that even a runner-up in the presidential election who received their support called Kozulin's appeal a provocation and stated that he would no longer propose the latter to join the coalition.

We would also like to remind the EU and the US of the full-scale use of power by the law-enforcement agencies against the rally in the capital of one of the largest European Union member states, including the use of water jets, tear-grenades, clubs and other special means. We strongly recommend the US and the EU to apply unified standards while assessing the actions of the law-enforcement bodies in Belarus and in their own countries.

It is obvious for objective monitors that the situation in Belarus is absolutely calm. In this regard we resolutely urge the European Union and the United States to stop trying to destabilize the situation from outside.

End Text.

KROL